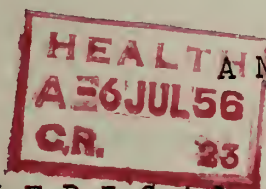


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HITCHIN RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL



ANNUAL REPORT
of the
MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH
for the year
1955

PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICIALS:

District Medical Officer of Health (and Divisional Medical
Officer for North Herts. Area):

VICTOR R. WALKER, M.B., Ch.B., B.Sc., D.P.H.

Divisional Health Office,
12 Brand Street, Hitchin.
(Telephone: Hitchin 3757)

Senior Sanitary Inspector and Cleansing Superintendent:

WILLIAM M. MATHEWS, Certs. S.I.E.J.B.,
Meat and Foods,
San. Science,
Smoke Inspection.

Additional Inspectors:

ROBERT B. BOLT, Certs. S.I.E.J.B.,
Testamur of Inst. of Public Cleansing.

LEONARD G. STRIBLEY, Certs. S.I.E.J.B.,
Meat and Foods.

Council Offices,
21 Bancroft, Hitchin.
(Telephone: Hitchin 4512-5)

Wm. E. Potter, Clerk to the Council.

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To the Chairman and Members of the Hitchin Rural District Council

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On the direction of Ministry of Health Circular 17/55 I present an annual report on the health and sanitary condition of your district for the year 1955.

In view of the age composition of population the local death rate of 11.5 is again very favourable ('standardised' rate 10.1). The live-birth rate of 15.9 exceeds the national rate. Infant mortality is twenty-five per cent under the rate for England and Wales, but the stillbirth rate for the year considerably exceeds the national figure, an isolated occurrence.

The local incidence of serious infectious disease was again low and your main local health problem continues to be housing, complicated by the problem of disrepair of older properties.

I would again acknowledge having received from your chief officers every consideration and help during the year. In the compilation of the report I would acknowledge the help of your Senior Sanitary Inspector, Mr. W. M. Mathews, who is wholly responsible for the sections touching upon sanitary environment.

I am, Ladies and Gentlemen,
Your obedient servant,

V. R. WALKER

District Medical Officer of Health

June 1956.

SECTION A

2.

LOCAL STATISTICS

Area (in acres)	.....	81,324
Home Population - Registrar-General's estimate for mid-1955	.....	22,060
Number of inhabited houses at 1st April 1956 (estd.)	.....	7,112
Rateable Value - 1st April 1956	.....	£172,994
Sum represented by Penny Rate (estimate 1956/7)	.....	£677

EXTRACTS FROM VITAL STATISTICS FOR THE YEAR 1955

	<u>Totals</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	HITCHIN RURAL DISTRICT	Comparable rates for England and Wales
<u>LIVE BIRTHS</u> (Legitimate)	339	186	153		
(Illegitimate)	11	8	3		
All	350	194	156		
Rate per 1,000 of the estimated resident population	15.9	15.0			
	<u>Totals</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>		
<u>STILLBIRTHS</u> (Legitimate)	16	9	7		
(Illegitimate)	-	-	-		
All	16	9	7		
Rate per 1,000 total (live and still births).	43.7	23.1			
	<u>Totals</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>		
<u>DEATHS</u>	253	138	115		
Rate per 1,000 of the estimated resident population	11.5	11.7			
<u>DEATH RATES OF INFANTS UNDER ONE YEAR OF AGE</u>					
All infants per 1,000 live births	17.1	24.9			
Rate for legit. infants per 1,000 legitimate births	17.7				
Rate for illegit. infants per 1,000 illegit. births	Nil				
Actual number of such deaths:					
(a) Under 4 weeks and (b) Under 1 year					
Legitimate	4	6			
Illegitimate	-	-			
	4	6			

3.

Deaths from pregnancy, childbirth or abortion	-
Deaths from Cancer (all sites)	44
Deaths from Measles	-
Deaths from Whooping Cough	-
Deaths from other infective and parasitic diseases	-

Comment on Vital Statistics

The estimated local mid-year population this year shows a moderate increase (180).

Total live-births numbered 350 against 328 in 1954 and total deaths 253 against 226.

Principal Causes of Death

Of the total of 253 deaths, 101 were attributed to Heart and other Circulatory Diseases, 41 to Vascular Lesions of the Nervous System, 44 to Cancer (all sites) and 21 to Respiratory Diseases.

SECTION B

General Provision of Health Services

No important change occurred during the year.

SECTION C

Staff

Although the national picture of recruitment into the ranks of the Sanitary Inspectors is gloomy and the response to advertised vacant posts is scanty, this position has not yet affected Hitchin R.D.C. The staff has been kept busy upon routine duties which are developing considerably, particularly under the slum clearance and meat inspection headings. Appreciation is due to all members of the staff who have worked conscientiously to be of service to the Council and the public.

Sanitary Circumstances of the Area

Water Supplies

In the Annual Report last year reference was made to the report from the Council's Consulting Engineers, Messrs. D. Balfour & Sons, regarding the improvement of the supply in the Western and Southern areas of the district. As a result of this report test pumping was carried out during the summer at King's Walden pumping station and a licence obtained from the Ministry to increase the

rate of abstraction to half a million gallons per day. Tenders were also obtained for the laying of mains to afford a supply to The Node and nearby properties at Codicote, and also to link our water undertaking with the Knebworth Undertaking.

The alterations and extensions to Chipping Pumping Station have been commenced but due to unavoidable delays, work has not progressed as speedily as had been hoped. It is, however, expected that work will be completed in the early summer of 1956.

The water levels in the Council's boreholes give no cause for alarm but do reflect the general tendency for the sub-soil water level to fall in the chalk and the report of the Minister's Inspector regarding the water supplies of Hertfordshire embodying observations of the Geological Survey is awaited with interest.

The borehole for Welwyn Garden City Council at Fulling Mill which lies just within this Council's area has been put down and test pumping carried out. Information has also been received from Hitchin U.D.C. regarding a proposed borehole at Offley Holes Farm which is also in this Council's area.

Two tables of analysis are submitted:-

1. Taken by the Council's Engineer and Surveyor to test the quality of the water delivered from the pumping stations into the mains.
2. Taken by the Public Health Department to test the quality of the water delivered to the consumer.

Table 1

Pumping Station	Total	Raw Water		Treated Water	
		Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail
Ashwell	4	4	-	-	-
Codicote	4	4	-	-	-
King's Walden	8	4	-	4	-
Wymondley	4	4	-	-	-
Braughing	No records - under control of Braughing R.D.C.				
Totals	20	16	-	4	-

Table 2

	<u>No.</u> <u>taken</u>	<u>Satis-</u> <u>factory</u>	<u>Unsatis-</u> <u>factory</u>	<u>Doubt-</u> <u>ful</u>
1. <u>Council Undertakings</u>				
Potters Heath	2	2	-	-
King's Walden	9	9	-	-
Pirton (Holwell)	11	-	11	-
Ashwell	1	1	-	-
Hitchin-Braughing	10	10	-	-
Kimpton	2	2	-	-
2. <u>Private Undertakings</u>				
Knebworth	3	3	-	-
3. <u>Bulk Supplies</u>				
Stevenage U.D.	1	1	-	-
4. <u>Other Sources</u>				
Special samples (private supplies)	47	14	33	-
Biggleswade Water Board (piped private supply)	1	1	-	-
	87	43	44	-

Sewerage and Sewage Disposal

The new sewage works in Offley village came into operation early in the year and work commenced shortly afterwards on the Holwell Sewerage scheme. Due to lack of labour, however, the contract date for completion at Holwell was not achieved, but it is anticipated that the Works will come into operation early in 1956.

Terms have still not been agreed for discharging the sewage from Knebworth into the trunk sewer; it is, however, expected that agreement will be reached in order that the connections to the outfall sewer may be made. It is understood that Rye Meads Sewage Works will be in a position to accept the flow from Knebworth on the 1st April 1956.

Tenders have been obtained for the Whitwell Sewerage Scheme and authority given for the work to commence without delay. During the year the conditions at Kimpton deteriorated seriously

and Messrs. D. Balfour & Sons were instructed to proceed with the preparation of this scheme.

The scheme for Ickleford still shows relatively no progress as it is, of course, dependent upon the Hitchin U.D.C. proceeding with the extension of their sewage works.

Public Cleansing Service

Refuse Collection and Disposal

The remarks relating to labour shortages, difficulties in keeping up to time schedules and the constant procession of staff changes appear to be becoming hardy annuals. Again, all rounds have been attended as planned, but this has only been achieved by the working of a considerable amount of overtime, which has come to be accepted as a permanent feature of collection instead of being regarded as exceptional. The working of overtime, however, does appear to help retain the staff that can be recruited against the competition of the many attractive factory positions.

The year was distinctive in two main respects. Firstly, it saw the arrival of a new diesel-engined refuse vehicle in September, and for the first time since the collection system started in 1948, this meant that a spare vehicle existed in case of breakdowns. A scheme was worked out so that on heavy days five vehicles could be used instead of four, but this has been little used as yet due to staff shortages. Secondly, the challenge to the district to increase the salvage findings by 30% on the 1954 figures was taken up and met. This was a very good effort on the part of residents and collection staff because the figure of 92 tons for 1954 was itself easily a peace-time record for the Hitchin Rural District. In 1955, the figure reached - 140 tons - was just what the paper mills required and much work went into assuring that the target was reached.

Some figures relating to refuse collection and salvage are included below:-

Refuse Collected

<u>Year</u>	<u>No. of Loads</u>	<u>Approx. weight of all materials collected</u>	<u>Vehicle mileage</u> (inc. foreman's van)
1952	1822	3330 tons	47,314
1953	1947	3731 "	51,579
1954	2012	4398 "	48,758
1955	2012	3996 "	48,862

Salvage

Year							
1948	-	64	tons collected and sold	-	income	£269.	7. 0d.
1949	-	53 ³ / ₄	"	"	"	£180.	2. 6d.
1950	-	39	"	"	"	£131.	6. 2d.
1951	-	56	"	"	"	£837.	11. 9d.
1952	-	35	"	"	"	£346.	13. 1d.
1953	-	22	"	"	"	£119.	17. 1d.
1954	-	92	"	"	"	£627.	11. 4d.
1955	-	140	"	"	"	£1130.	4. 4d.

Cesspool and Night-soil Collection work

During the year the Public Health Committee again considered the basis of the cesspool emptying scheme and decided to make no profound changes at present. This decision would seem to be justified by the functioning of the system as it is at present constituted. The peak periods of the year continue to be April to August and again in March. At these times some delay occurs but no serious danger has resulted therefrom and efforts are made to accord a degree of priority to deserving cases.

Details of work performed are given below:-

Year	<u>Houses in Private ownership</u>		<u>Council Houses</u>		<u>Loads from Sewage Works</u>	<u>Pails emptied</u>
	<u>Free</u>	<u>Chargeable</u>	<u>Free</u>	<u>Chargeable</u>		
1952						
(Pet.veh.)	315	169	10	31	466	2947
(Dies.veh.)	156	86	18	30	262	1347
1953						
(Pet.veh.)	196	102	7	29	233	1812
(Dies.veh.)	343	186	20	122	314	2533
1954						
(Pet.veh.)	251	120	5	42	182	1934
(Dies.veh.)	313	168	21	139	450	2746
1955						
(Pet.veh.)	283	116	6	48	214	1850
(Dies.veh.)	375	177	16	72	507	3333

Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949

Warfarin continues to be used for the bulk of the work done under the Joint Control Scheme serving Hitchin Rural, Welwyn Rural and Royston Urban Districts. Very few cases indeed ever need second treatment and the condition of refuse tips and sewage works is undoubtedly the best recommendation for the efficiency of this rodenticide. Details of the work done are as follows:-

ETCHIN & WELBY RURAL AND ROYSTON URBAN DISTRICT COUNCILS JOINT PESTS CONTROL SCHEME

SUMMARY

JANUARY 1st to DECEMBER 31st 1955.

DISTRICT	NUMBER OF HOURS WORKED						TOTAL
	SEWERS	TTFS ETC.	PRIVATE DWELLINGS	BUS. PREMIS.	BLOCK INSP.	INSP. OF AGRIC. LAND	
ETCHIN R.D.C.	109	525 $\frac{1}{2}$	395 $\frac{1}{2}$	40 $\frac{1}{2}$	34 $\frac{1}{4}$	227 $\frac{1}{2}$	1332 $\frac{3}{4}$
WELBY R.D.C.	-	109 $\frac{1}{2}$	92 $\frac{1}{2}$	18 $\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{3}{4}$	32	252 $\frac{3}{4}$
ROYSTON U.D.C.	45 $\frac{1}{2}$	70 $\frac{3}{4}$	49 $\frac{1}{2}$	5 $\frac{1}{2}$	4	13	188 $\frac{1}{4}$
	154 $\frac{1}{2}$	706	537 $\frac{1}{2}$	64 $\frac{1}{2}$	39	272 $\frac{1}{2}$	1773 $\frac{3}{4}$
Other figures -							278
Total mileage covered -							6094
Petrol used -							157
Approx. W.P.G. -							38.82
Total hours worked							2051 $\frac{3}{4}$

Old Vehicle
(GUR 211)

New Vehicle
(TUR 871)

Time spent on vehicle maint., receiving instructions, reports on visits, bait handling etc.

N.B. New vehicle brought into use 11/3/55.

Sanitary Inspection of the Area

The following summary gives details of visits made and inspections performed. The use of Statutory procedure continues to be kept to the essential minimum.

The number of visits and inspections for all purposes was 3430, detailed as follows in comparison with the year 1954:-

<u>General Sanitation etc.</u>	<u>1954</u>	<u>1955</u>
Water Supply	81	144
Drainage ..	622	338
Cowsheds, Stables and Piggeries	-	1
Tents, Vans and Sheds (including Caravans) .	206	204
Factories, Workplaces and Outworkers	22	36
Bakehouses..	16	4
Licensed Premises ..	78	23
Refuse Collection and Disposal and Salvage .	465	464
Rodent Control	62	88
Atmospheric Pollution	1	1
Schools ...	4	4
Shops	45	28
Petroleum Regulations	75	105
National Assistance Act	-	7
Miscellaneous Visits	167	131
<u>Housing</u>		
Public Health Act - visits paid ...	640	624
Housing Acts - " "	102	373
Filthy or Verminous Premises - visits paid .	44	49
Miscellaneous visits	24	48
<u>Infectious Diseases etc.</u>		
Enquiries in cases of I.D....	7	19
Visits re disinfection	11	5
" " food poisoning ...	-	4
Miscellaneous I.D. visits ..	4	3
<u>Meat and Food Inspection (inc.inspection of premises)</u>		
Slaughterhouses	466	617
Butchers ...	78	25
Canteens ...	3	-
Dairies and Milk Distributors	12	6
Fishmongers and Poulterers..	2	2
Food Preparing Premises	16	6
Grocers	102	21
Greengrocers	1	2
Ice-Cream Premises .	17	8
Restaurants	11	2
Milk (sampling)	-	22
Miscellaneous Food visits ..	16	16
	<u>3400</u>	<u>3430</u>

SECTION DHousing

At the 31st December 1955, the number of applications on the Council's waiting lists for housing accommodation was 643, being 459 less than the previous year. During 1955, 157 new applications were registered, and 616 were deleted from the lists. Approximately 100 of the applicants on the lists were re-housed. The applications deleted from the lists were due in some cases to the applicants having left the district, but in a larger number of cases due to the applicants failing to renew their applications and not replying to enquiries as to whether they still needed accommodation.

The Council have continued their policy of transferring families from one type of property to another, so that the accommodation is used to the best advantage. Elderly couples and people living alone in three-bedroom houses have been re-housed in bungalows, thus making available the houses for larger families.

The number of properties for which Improvement Grants were approved during the year was 91, making a total of 185 properties since the inception of the scheme.

The following figures give the number of new dwellings completed during the year:-

No. of new permanent dwellings completed by the Council	99
--	----

No. of new permanent dwellings completed by private enterprise	79
---	----

178

During the year a return was made to the Ministry under the Housing Repairs and Rents Act 1954. This provided figures relating to the estimated number of properties that may have to be dealt with under the headings of Clearance or Demolition Orders. Other information was given indicating the speed at which it was hoped to be able to deal with such conditions.

Caravans

This type of dwelling is the cause of severe anxiety to many Councils, but with approximately 131 vans in this area,

the Hitchin Rural District Council seems to be favoured with a good type of occupier because little trouble is experienced apart from keeping up inspections for licensing purposes. It is a great pity that better control does not exist over the gipsy type of van dweller because many of them despoil the countryside seriously.

SECTION E

Food

(a) Inspection of Meat and Other Foods

The return of meat inspection (July 1954) meant that 1955 was the first full year of post-war meat inspection experience in this Council's district. Reference was made last year to the fact that slaughtering was being performed at hours which required inspection to be carried out outside normal working hours. This has been a constant commitment and has been met by -

- (i) Each District Inspector working on overtime duties on alternate weeks.
- (ii) Allowance of compensatory time off for hours worked.

The details of the work done are:-

Carcases and Offal inspected and condemned in whole or in part

	Cattle Excluding Cows	Cows	Calves	Sheep and Lambs	Pigs	Horses
Number killed	568	73	91	1962	477	-
Number inspected	568	73	91	1962	477	-
<u>All diseases except Tuberculosis and Cysticerci</u>						
Whole carcasses condemned	2	-	1	-	1	-
Carcases of which some part or organ was condemned	72	4	-	37	6	-
Percentage of the number inspected affected with dis- ease other than Tuber. and Cyst.	13.0	5.5	1.1	1.9	1.5	-
<u>Tuberculosis only</u>						
Whole carcasses condemned	-	-	-	-	-	-
Carcases of which some part or organ was condemned	28	4	-	-	-	-
Percentage of the number inspected affected with Tuberculosis	4.9	5.5	-	-	-	-
<u>Cysticercosis</u>						
Carcases of which some part or organ was condemned	5	1	-	-	-	-
Carcases submitted to treatment by refrigeration	3	1	-	-	-	-
Generalised and totally condemned	-	-	-	-	-	-

13.

The weight of foods condemned as unfit for human consumption was:-

	<u>Tons</u>	<u>Cwts.</u>	<u>Qtrs.</u>	<u>Lbs.</u>	<u>Ozs</u>
Tinned food...	-	-	2	21	3
Butter	-	-	-	15	-
Pork	-	3	-	24	-
Mutton	-	-	2	24	-
Beef	1	13	3	17	8
	1	18	2	17	11

The number of premises in the district registered under Section 14 of the Food & Drugs Act 1938 for the Sale of Ice-Cream is 61, and for the Preparation or Manufacture of Preserved Food etc. 35, of which 8 are not now in active use.

(b) Milk

During the year complaints of early souring of milk were received from the Northern portion of the district. The matter was investigated and representatives from the dairy supplying the milk to the retailer were brought into the enquiries. It was found that the retailer was purchasing milk in excess of his daily requirements and disposing of his stock in hand the next day. Advice was given to the dealer concerned, since when no repetition has occurred.

The results of 53 milk samples taken in this area appear below -

Sampling Authority	School and Designated milks	
	<u>Passed</u>	<u>Failed</u>
Herts. County Council	32	3
Hitchin R.D.C.	14	4 *
Totals	46	7

* Due to maximum overnight temperature being greater than 65°F.

The Specified Areas Scheme of 1954 remains in force. Under this, only Designated Milks such as Tuberculin Tested, Pasteurised and Sterilised may be sold in the Council's area.

During the year, 16 Dealer's Licences were issued in respect of the sale of Designated milks from 9 premises in the district, and 27 Supplementary Licences were granted to 15 firms retailing Designated milks in the district from premises situated elsewhere.

(c) Food Poisoning

In addition to the cases referred to in Section F of this report, one case of alleged injury from dangerous food was investigated by the Sanitary Inspector. This concerned a tin of fruit salad which was said to have been heavily acidic and to have caused injury to the tongue and mouth of the consumer. A small amount of the contents of the tin was retrieved and sent for examination but it was subsequently pronounced to be normal.

(d) Factories Acts 1937 and 1948

An abstract from the report submitted to the Ministry of Labour and National Service on Form 572 is given herewith -

1. Inspections for purposes of provisions as to health
(including inspections made by Sanitary Inspectors)

Premises	No. on Reg- ister	Number of -		
		Inspec- tions	Written Notices	Occupiers Prosecuted
(i) Factories in which Secs. 1,2,3,4 and 6 are to be enforced by Local Authorities	15	2	-	-
(ii) Factories not included in (i) in which Sec.7 is enforced by the Local Authority	90	23	-	-
(iii) Other prems. in which Sec.7 is enforced by the Local Authority (excl. Outworkers' prems.)	1	2	-	-
TOTAL	106	27	-	-

2. Cases in which defects were found

Particulars	No. of cases in which defects found				No. of Prosec- utions
	Found	Remedied	To H.M. Inspec.	By H.M. Inspec.	
Want of cleanliness	1	2	-	1	-
Overcrowding	-	-	-	-	-
Unreasonable temp.	-	-	-	-	-
Inadequate ventilation	-	-	-	-	-
Ineffective drainage of floors	-	-	-	-	-
Sanitary conveniences					
(a) Insufficient	1	1	-	1	-
(b) Unsuitable or defective	1	1	-	-	-
(c) Not separate for sexes	-	-	-	-	-
Other offences against the Act.	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	3	4	-	2	-

Outworkers. There are 22 Outworkers reported in the district.

SECTION FPrevalence of, and Control over, Infectious and other Diseases

For the year local notifications of acute infectious diseases (after correction) were: Measles 117, Whooping Cough 32, Infective hepatitis 18, Scarlet fever 3, Food poisoning 3, Acute pneumonia 3, Erysipelas 1, and Acute Anterior Poliomyelitis 2 (Paralytic 1, Non-Paralytic 1).

The incidence of Measles and Whooping Cough fell mainly in the second and third quarters.

Scarlet fever continues remarkably infrequent, sporadic in incidence, confined to younger children, and of mild severity.

Of the two cases (both adults) of Anterior Poliomyelitis in the Autumn, one was non-paralytic and one (in a young adult male) rapidly fatal from bulbar paralysis.

Infective hepatitis was scattered in incidence throughout the year with a special frequency in young adolescents and in the St.Ippollitts district.

Food poisoning was confined to three cases in one family, the causal organism being 'S.typhi-murium'. The presumptive vehicle was cooked meat which had made a considerable journey in a warm motor car after purchase at an unidentified wayside store.

Diphtheria was again absent from the district during the year. Despite continued rarity of this formerly dreaded disease the offer of infant protection by immunisation continues to be accepted by a good proportion of parents. For children under two years combined protection against Diphtheria and Whooping cough is now available from both Welfare Centres and Medical Practitioners.

TUBERCULOSISNew Cases and Deaths during the year 1955

Age Periods	New Cases				Deaths			
	Respiratory		Non-Respiratory		Respiratory		Non-Respiratory	
	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.
0 - 1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1 - 5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5 - 15	2(1)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
15 - 25	1(1)	1(1)	-	-	-	-	-	-
25 - 35	5(3)	4(3)	-	-	-	-	-	-
35 - 45	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
45 - 55	2(1)	2(1)	-	-	-	-	-	-
55 - 65	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
and over	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-
Not known	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Totals	10(6)	7(5)	-	-	3	-	-	-
Deaths allocated by the Registrar General after final transfers					1	-	-	-

Footnote. Figures of new cases include inward transfers from other areas, the numbers of such being shown additionally in brackets.

Comment.

New notifications of respiratory tuberculosis in the local population (as distinct from inward transfers) are seen to be considerably less (4 males and 2 females) than the numbers (10 males and 2 females) for 1954; no non-respiratory cases were notified.

Deaths from tuberculosis are all recorded in males over 65 years. After transfers by the Registrar General only one (elderly male) death was finally allocated to the district.

V. R. WALKER

District Medical Officer of Health

June 1956.